

DARFIELD
URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Medical Officer's Report

FOR

1898

BY

DR. R. F. CASTLE,

M.B. & B.C., Camb.

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Medical Report for 1898.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,

This year I am pleased to be able to commence my Report as I had hoped to have done last year. The year has been a more healthy one than the past one, and we may be thankful that we have escaped the severe epidemics which have caused so much suffering, loss of life, and expense in some of the neighbouring districts.

First let us take the vital statistics.

The population of the district by house calculation (5·5 inmates to the house) amounts to 4,483. In addition to this there is a considerable migratory population, which comes and goes and finds room for itself where possible, as the result of the work going on in connection with the Midland Railway Extension.

The births registered amount to 168; the total number of deaths is 61; giving a natural increase of population (births minus deaths) of 100.

The certified causes of death are as follows:

Zymotic Diseases	Whooping Cough	...	7
	Typhoid Fever	...	1
	Measles	...	1
Diarrhoea, etc.	...	...	11
Phthisis	...	...	4
Bronchitis	...	...
Pneumonia	...	...	13
Pleurisy	...	...
Heart Disease	...	...	4
Influenza	...	...	1
Injuries	...	...	1
All other Diseases	...	...	25
			—
	Total	...	68

The ages at death were as follows :

Under one year ...	...	...	...	34
One and under five	...	...	...	10
Five and under fifteen	...	...	...	3
Fifteen and under twenty-five	...	...	...	4
Twenty-five and under sixty-five			...	14
Sixty-five and upwards ...	...	...	...	3

These figures give a death rate of 15.2 per 1,000, and a birth rate of 37.75 per 1,000. The infant mortality (under one year of age) amounts to 202.5 per 1,000 registered births.

As last year, I will now give a table illustrating the comparative death rate of the different districts :

	Population.	Infantile Deaths.	Deaths at all ages.	Ratio per 100.
Snape Hill ...	1,540	9	20	1.3
Low Valley ...	1,054	14	25	2.3
Darfield Proper ...	880	4	8	0.9
Darfield Bridge and Mill Houses ...	671	7	14	2.0

This table shows that the deaths were more evenly distributed over the whole district than they were last year, and we may therefore suppose that the condition of the whole district was therefore more uniform from a sanitary point of view than it was before.

Next, I give a small table to show the relative prevalence of the different infectious diseases which are notified :

	Population.	Scarlatina.	Enteric Fever.	Erysipelas.
Snape Hill...	1,540	24	1	2
Low Valley	1,054	10	—	1
Darfield Proper	880	10	2	—
Darfield Bridge and Mill Houses ...	671	4	2	1

This table shows that there have been 48 cases of Scarlet Fever during the year (more than there were last year) which have all been removed to the Kendray Hospital; there has also been one case in an outlying district which was effectually isolated at home.

In one case there was a second appearance of the Fever in the same individual after his return from the Hospital; otherwise the results of removal have been good.

There have been five cases of Typhoid Fever notified.

In one case the disease was undoubtedly imported from Cudworth. In another it was apparently caught from drinking water out of the horse trough in the pit. The dried excreta of men working in the pit, when mixed with coal dust, might possibly give rise to germs which could be carried by the ventilating draught, and so the water might become contaminated without any direct infiltration of sewage into the water trough. The other three cases were, I believe, always of a doubtful character, and very likely were not cases of true Typhoid Fever, though they resembled that disease.

There have been four cases of Erysipelas, but none have been of a malignant type.

There has been an epidemic of Whooping Cough, which has caused seven deaths ; this disease overspread the whole of the neighbourhood, and is still prevalent. The only preventive measure that I can suggest is, that on the appearance of this disease or of measles in the district, the parents of the children should be served with handbills setting forth the prevalence and danger of the disease and warning them of the risk to which they expose their children by needlessly bringing them into contact with those already affected.

I believe there is a very strong feeling in the district that diseases are sent by the Almighty, and that if it is decreed that their children are to have the disease, they will have it, and *vice versa*. They therefore argue that it is almost impious to take any measures to prevent the children from catching the illness, as they would thus be interfering with God's will in the matter. This ought to be combatted.

It is no use waiting to get circulars printed until the disease is upon us ; they should be printed beforehand ; so many for Measles ; so many for Whooping Cough ; and so many for Scarlet Fever ; and should be kept in store at the Council's offices ready for distribution when there is any sign of the approach of an epidemic.

With reference to the action of the different teachers in the schools ; they are naturally anxious that there should be a good attendance at the school, and often urge the brothers and sisters of infected children to attend school (even though they have been ordered not to do so by the Medical Officer), for fear of the school grant being diminished by a small attendance sheet. This is a great mistake, for the Education Department allows the attendances of the children who have been ordered to remain at home to be counted as if they had been present ; on the other hand, no careful parents would allow their child to attend a school which was openly infected in this way, and I should much doubt any magistrate attempting to enforce such attendance.

During the year two important matters have been carried through.

The first is the arrangement made under the Private Streets Improvement Act with respect to New Street, under which the road will be properly made and metalled, and the houses more efficiently drained.

The second is the removal of the opposition to the sewage scheme. Suitable land can now be purchased, and the plans are ready for submission to the Local Government Board ; in all probability the new scheme will be in operation before the lapse of the next two years.

With reference to the road making of the district, much is to be desired. The roads, even when well metalled, are too soft, and do not bind well together. The result is that they are very dusty in summer and very muddy in wet weather. Both of these conditions I consider to be bad for the health of the inhabitants, especially where so much garbage is thrown into the roadway as is the case in many parts of the district. The dust becomes impregnated with animal and vegetable matter and is most irritating to delicate children, whilst the sodden roads overflow and soak into the foundations of many of the houses, forming a breeding place for diseases of all kinds.

I should like to suggest that it would be wise to use the road roller more, and more systematically, and in making new roads to employ some medium, such as pitch, to assist in binding the stones together and so forming a waterproof surface where houses face on to the roadway.

There are still several private roads which sadly require improvement ; let us hope that next year may see the completion of the work which has been commenced.

The Bye-Laws are still in abeyance, though several meetings have been held to form new ones ; no doubt these will be remedied during the next year.

I remain, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

R. F. CASTLE,

M.B. & B.C., Camb.,

DARFIELD URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

DARFIELD,

February 10th, 1899.

TO DR. R. F. CASTLE, M.B. & B.C., Camb.,
THE MEDICAL OFFICER FOR THE DARFIELD URBAN
DISTRICT COUNCIL.

SIR,

I have to report that, since my last report (April 9th 1898) I have followed up my inspections of most of the properties in the thickly populated places weekly. The scavenging work, though somewhat neglected at times, has been fairly well done. The bell cart work for rough refuse has done good work, thereby keeping the ashpits (especially where there are screens) free from rough refuse, so that the material for tillage is more readily disposed of.

Since March 31st, 1898, to December 31st, 1898,
34 houses have been certified for occupation.

11 waste water closets have been erected for new houses.

6 midden ashpits have been erected for new houses.

3 closets have been altered to have movable pans.

7 new midden closets have been built in place of old ones.

3 slop water closets have been built in place of old midden closets.

10 sinks disconnected and gully traps set thereto.

7 official notices to abate nuisances.

14 letter „ „

—
21

20 abated.

—
1 nuisance in hand.

- 2 samples of new milk have been sent for analysis.
- 3 samples of water have been sent for analysis.
- 7 rooms in dwelling-houses have been disinfected in consequence of fever.
- 2 mixed and infant schools have been disinfected in consequence of fever.

PIG KEEPING required a good deal of attention at Darfield Bridge, Millhouses, and Snape Hill. These are in close proximity to houses: low situations, badly paved floors, wet surroundings, and no covered manure place, and at times a little delay in removing manure.

COWSHEDS.—Improvement is very much required in some cowsheds, which have been promised to be done, but for some cause delayed.

SLAUGHTER-HOUSES are frequently looked over.

- 1. Bradley's.—Not in a good situation; too near the houses, and a manure place very near.
- 2. Heppinstall's.—Fairly good premises, having good drainage.
- 3. Smith's.—Fairly good premises, having good drainage.
- 4. Wilkinson's.—Fairly good size for one beast, but the premises are crowded.
- 5. Hinchcliffe's.—Good new premises, and well drained.

TRIPE DRESSINGS.

- 1. Wilkinson's.—Faulty and bad floors.
- 2. Hinchcliffe's.—Good new premises, and well drained.

PRIVATE STREET WORKS are having attention; one street, 340 yards long, the contract having been entered into for the work.

PUBLIC ROADS.—A good deal of improvements are now being carried out.

D. HAMMERTON,

Sanitary Inspector.

